

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

/060 W

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R 081438Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0215

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 1419

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FI, UR

SUBJECT: KEKKONEN'S TRIP TO SOVIET UNION UNEVENTFUL

1. BASED ON FINNISH PRESS REPORTS, THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE, AND LIMITED CONVERSATIONS WITH FINNISH SOURCES, WE CONCLUDE THAT PRESIDENT KEKKONEN'S TRIP TO THE USSR JUNE 21-28 WAS ON THE WHOLE UNEVENTFUL. A NEW NAME HAS BEEN COINED FOR THESE KINDS OF VISITS BY THE SOVIETS. THE RUSSIAN WORD TRANSLATES MOST COSELY TO "WORKING" VISIT. THE INTENTION MAY HAVE BEEN TO POINT UP THE FACT THAT IN SPITE OF FREQUENT FISHING OR HUNTING DURING KEKKONEN'S MANY UNOFFICIAL VISITS TO THE SOVIET UNION, THEY ALSO INCLUDE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF OFFICIAL MEETINGS WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP.

2. IN TRYING TO EVALUATE WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY EITHER SIDE DURING THE VISIT WE COME UP WITH THE ANSWER: "NOT ALL THAT MUCH." LOOKING AT IT FROM THE FINNISH VANTAGE POINT, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT KEKKONEN HAS LONG STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP. THIS
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TIME THE COMMUNIQUE UNDERLINES THIS BY STATING THAT

"--THE REGULAR PERSONAL CONTACTS BETWEEN PRESIDENT KEKKONEN AND THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP---HAVE BECOME ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORMS OF POLITICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN FINLAND AND THE USSR." KEEPING THIS IN MIND, THE FINNS AT LEAST ATTACHED SOME IMPORTANCE TO THE FACT THAT KEKKONEN THIS TIME DID MEET WITH BREZHNEV. ONLY INTERPRETERS WERE PRESENT AT THEIR MEETING AND IT MAY THEREFORE BE SOME TIME BEFORE ANY REAL HARD INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE ON WHAT THEY DISCUSSED.

3. THE COMMUNIQUE REVEALS SOME OF THE TOPICS OF THE KEKKONEN-BREZHNEV DISCUSSIONS, AND IS LARGELY DEVOTED TO INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS. WHEN POLCOUNS ASKED MFA POLITICAL DEPARTMENT SECTION CHIEF JAAKKO BLOMBERG (WHO DID NOT ACCOMPANY KEKKONEN TO USSR) ABOUT THE SEEMINGLY ONE-SIDED NATURE OF THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE, THE ENDORSEMENT BY BOTH PARTIES OF SEVERAL MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE SOVIETS, AND LITTLE IDENTIFIABLE AS STRICTLY IN THE FINNISH INTEREST, BLOMBERG SAID THAT FIRST OF ALL THIS WAS A DIFFERENT TYPE OF COMMUNIQUE. BLOMBERG ADDED THAT WHEREAS THE COMMUNIQUE IN CONNECTION WITH OFFICIAL OR STATE VISITS GO INTO GREAT DETAIL ON BILATERAL MATTERS AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS, THE UNOFFICIAL VISIT COMMUNIQUE ARE USUALLY MUCH SHORTER AND HEAVILY WEIGHTED IN FAVOR OF INTERNATIONAL SUBJECTS. BLOMBERG SAID THAT THE KEKKONEN-BREZHNEV MEETING WAS DEVOTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS AND THAT MOST OF THE SUBJECTS HAD BEEN SUGGESTED BY THE SOVIETS. THE FINNS HAD FOUND MANY THAT THEY COULD AGREE WITH OR SUPPORT WITHOUT COMPROMISING THEIR POSITION AS A NEUTRAL. ACCORDING TO BLOMBERG IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING THAT COMMUNIQUE MIGHT SEEM SOMEWHAT LOPSIDED, BUT THAT THIS IN NO WAY INDICATED SOVIET PRESSURE ON FINLAND. (WHAT IS NOT KNOWN OF COURSE, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME, IS WHAT OTHER ITEMS THE SOVIETS MAY ALSO HAVE SUGGESTED FOR DISCUSSION AND INCLUSION IN THE COMMUNIQUE THAT THE FINNS DEMURRED ON.) EXAMPLES OF THESE SUBJECTS OF INTEREST TO THE SOVIETS ARE

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ENDORSEMENT OF CPSU 25TH CONGRESS PEACE PROGRAM AND SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON NON-USE OF FORCE (BOTH NEW ITEMS). THE FINNS AGAIN ENDORSED THE BREZHNEV PROPOSALS FOR CONFERENCES ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, COMMUNICATIONS, AND ENERGY, AS CSCE FOLLOW UP.

4. ONLY REALLY "NEW" ASPECT OF COMMUNIQUE IS FINNISH

SUPPORT FOR PLO PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCES "FROM THE BEGINNING AND WITH EQUAL RIGHTS." BLOMBERG SAID THAT SOVIETS WANTED THIS ITEM IN THE COMMUNIQUE AND THE GOF ACCEPTED ON BASIS THAT THEY DO NOT WANT ANY PRE-CONDITIONS FOR PLO PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA CONFERENCES. (ISRAELI AMBASSADOR JUNE 29 TOLD POLCOUNS THAT THIS COMMUNIQUE ITEM WAS NO SURPRISE TO GOI SINCE FINNS HAD ALREADY PRIVATELY TOLD GOI THAT THIS WAS GOF POSITION. ISRAELI AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT GOI DOES NOT LOOK UPON THIS AS ANY MAJOR CHANGE IN GOF POLICY OR AS CAUSE FOR WORRY.)

5. IF THE VISIT WAS LARGELY UNEVENTFUL, THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT IT WAS VERY TIRING ON PRESIDENT KEKKONEN. COMMODOR KLENBERG, KEKKONEN'S FIRST AIDE, TOLD POLCOUNS THAT ENTIRE PARTY HAD HAD DIFFICULTY IN READJUSTING TO THE TEN HOUR TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KAMCHATKA AND HELSINKI. THERE HAD ALREADY BEEN SOME SPECULATION ABOUT KEKKONEN'S HEALTH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIP. THIS WAS AS A RESULT OF HIS HAVING DEPARTED EARLY FROM THE KING'S WEDDING IN STOCKHOLM AND THE STATEMENT HE MADE WHEN ARRIVING IN THE USSR AT VYBORG THAT "HE WAS NOT AS FIT AS NORMALLY." DESPITE KEKKONEN'S DOCTOR SAYING THAT KEKKONEN'S HEALTH WAS PERFECTLY ALRIGHT AND THAT ALL HE NEEDED TO DO WAS TO PACE HIMSELF PROPERLY, PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT HIS HEALTH INEVITABLY AROSE. WHATEVER THE PROBLEM WAS, AND IT MAY HAVE BEEN NOTHING MORE SERIOUS THAN A PASSING STOMACH AILMENT, HE OVERCAME IT. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT KEKKONEN NOWADAYS TIRES MORE QUICKLY AND THAT HIS HEALTH IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE A COUPLE YEARS AGO. (HE HAS OF COURSE UNDERGONE A PROSTATE CONFIDENTIAL

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OPERATION SINCE THEN.) CONCERN ABOUT KEKKONEN'S HEALTH AND AGE IS FURTHER EVIDENCED BY THE GREAT CARE WITH WHICH THE FINNS HAVE INSISTED ON SUFFICIENT REST PERIODS FOR KEKKONEN DURING HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN WE NOTE THAT KEKKONEN PRESIDED A SPECIAL CABINET MEETING WITHIN HOURS OF HIS RETURN JUNE 29. AT THE EMBASSY'S BICENTENNIAL RECEPTION THREE DAYS LATER HE WAS JOVIAL, ALERT AND DISCUSSED HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES IN DETAIL AND WITH ENTHUSIASM.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO HARD EVIDENCE TO BACK UP OUR ASSUMPTIONS, WE NEVERTHELESS ASSUME THAT KEKKONEN IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH BREZHNEV BROUGHT UP CERTAIN POINTS THAT UNDER SECRETARY SISCO MADE TO KEKKONEN IN

HELSINKI. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF KEKKONEN WILL
HAVE SOME "MESSAGE" FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM BREZHNEV WHEN
HE COMES TO WASHINGTON.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976HELSIN01419
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760264-0140
From: HELSINKI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760780/aaaacsld.tel
Line Count: 173
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <09 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KEKKONEN'S TRIP TO SOVIET UNION UNEVENTFUL
TAGS: PFOR, FI, UR, (KEKKONEN, URHO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006